

# AKIRA

4

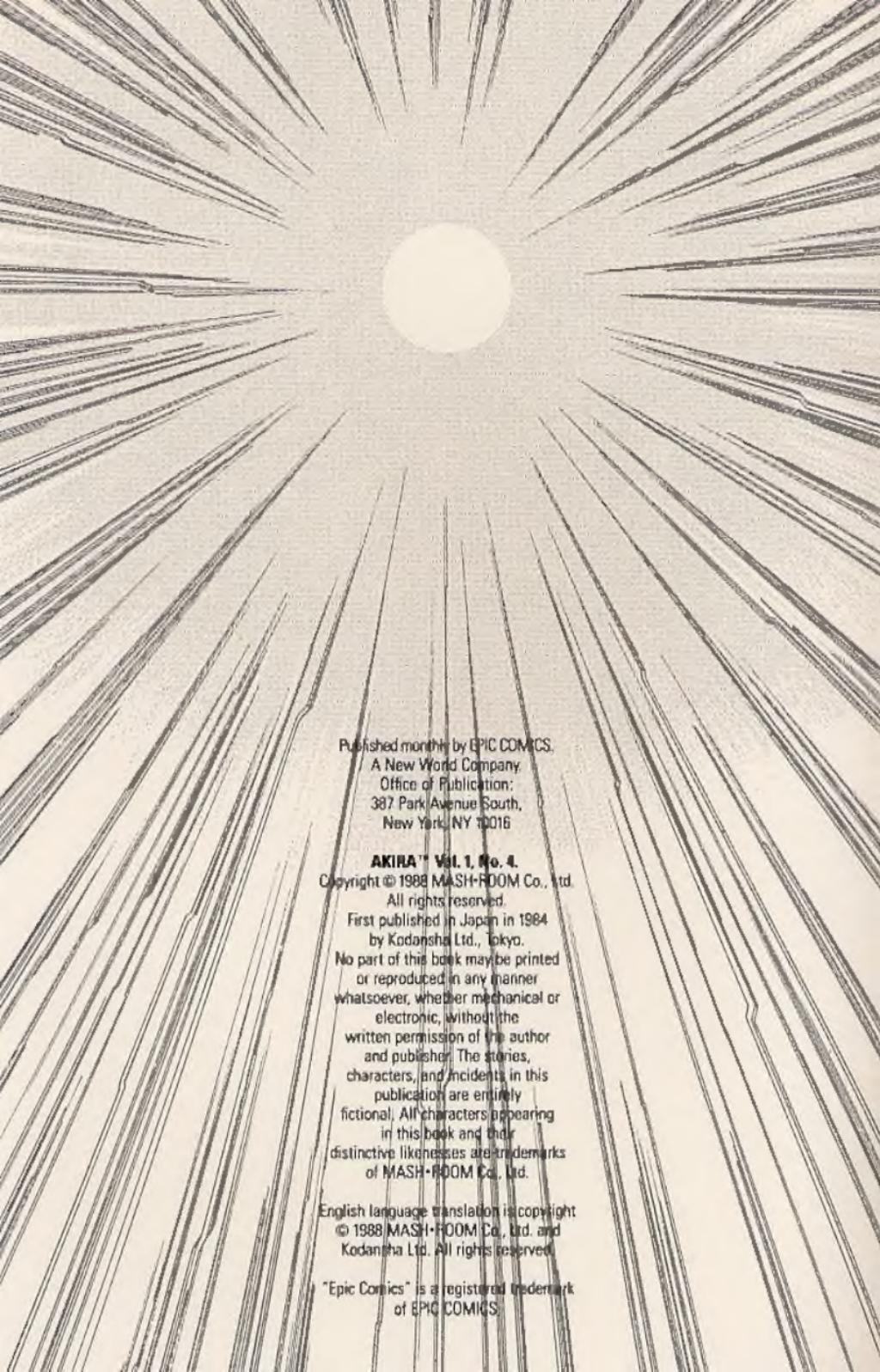
TM

C

EPIC COMICS® \$3.50 • \$4.75 CAN. • VOL. 1, NO. 4



KATSUHIRO OTOMO



Published monthly by EPIC COMICS,  
A New World Company,  
Office of Publication:  
387 Park Avenue South,  
New York, NY 10016

**AKIRA™ Vol. 1, No. 4.**  
Copyright © 1988 MASH-ROOM Co., Ltd.

All rights reserved.

First published in Japan in 1984  
by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo.  
No part of this book maybe printed  
or reproduced in any manner  
whatsoever, whether mechanical or  
electronic, without the  
written permission of the author  
and publisher. The stories,  
characters, and incidents in this  
publication are entirely  
fictional. All characters appearing  
in this book and their  
distinctive likenesses are trademarks  
of MASH-ROOM Co., Ltd.

English language translation is copyright  
© 1988 MASH-ROOM Co., Ltd. and  
Kodansha Ltd. All rights reserved.

"Epic Comics" is a registered trademark  
of EPIC COMICS.

# AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 4

## KING OF CLOWNS

# WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

The year is 2030. The world is rebuilding from World War III. In **Neo-Tokyo**, plans are being made to hold the next Olympics in the "old city," where, thirty-eight years before, the first of the bombs fell.

**Kaneda** and his friends, teenage delinquents, make an unauthorized motorcycle run to check out the old site. They encounter a terrified child, known only as **Number 26**, possessing extraordinary telekinetic abilities. During the encounter, the paranormal boy gravely injures **Tetsuo**, one of Kaneda's close friends. Then, he vanishes.

Kaneda's gang find themselves in trouble following the incident. They learn that the "police" they met following the accident were actually part of some secret concern. Moreover, **Tetsuo**, who they believed had been taken to a hospital, has disappeared.

The next night, at **Harukiya**, a tough local dive, **Kaneda** attempts, unsuccessfully, to pick up a newcomer, **Kay**. In fact, she and her companion, **Ryu**, are part of an underground resistance group dedicated to learning what is happening in the old city and putting a stop to it.

Trouble ensues and both delinquents and resistance fighters again encounter **Number 26**. Again, he uses his powers to catastrophic effect. Both groups are scattered, but

**Ryu** and **Kaneda** re-encounter **Number 26**. **Ryu** attempts to reassure the paranormal boy, but **Kaneda** is anxious to punish him for injuring **Tetsuo**. As they argue, the mysterious soldiers pursuing **Number 26** reach the scene. A firefight results.

**Kaneda** is separated from **Ryu** and **Number 26**, whom the soldiers are determined to recapture alive. **Kay** saves Kaneda's life, but **Ryu** and **Number 26** are cornered. The paranormal boy becomes increasingly ill, exhibiting symptoms of drug withdrawal. **Kaneda** returns the favor he owes the resistance fighters by stealing a truck and heading back to save **Ryu** and **Number 26**.

That is when the ominous **Colonel** in charge of the covert operation appears with a secret weapon—**Number 27**, a crippled paranormal child named **Masaru**.

**Masaru** astonishes the resistance fighters by addressing **Number 26** as **Takashi**. **Kay** and **Ryu** had assumed that **Number 26** was the Colonel's ultimate weapon—the as-yet unseen paranormal giant code-named **Akira**.





**Kaneda** provokes a crisis by pretending to threaten **Takashi**. He responds with telekinetic upheavals. **Kaneda** is again separated from the resistance fighters, but he manages to intercept and hide a pill meant for **Takashi**, who is recaptured by the Colonel's men.

The next day, **Tetsuo** reappears in school, seemingly all right. However, during Tetsuo's treatment, the **Colonel** has learned the delinquent shows great psychic potential and would be a valuable asset.

**Kaneda** has a girl friend in the school infirmary analyze the drug intended for **Takashi**. It is similar in substance to stuff **Kaneda** and his friends take, but unbelievably concentrated and powerful.

Eager for action, **Kaneda**, **Tetsuo**, and their gang head out for a rumble with their chief rivals—the vicious **Clown** gang.

One of the **Clowns** comes to **Tetsuo**. **Kaneda** and his group come to the rescue. **Tetsuo** astonishes them, first by displaying uncharacteristic bloodthirstiness, and then by challenging Kaneda's authority.

Determined not to let a potential human weapon escape

him, the **Colonel** goes to the school the next day. Collecting **Tetsuo** there, he also encounters **Kaneda** and almost captures him.

Under treatments of the Colonel's chief medical officer, **Tetsuo** begins to exhibit powerful psychic abilities...and to undergo great pain.

Meanwhile, **Kaneda**, trying to spy on the **Colonel** and learn what is happening to **Tetsuo**, re-encounters the members of the resistance, and is brought back to their headquarters. He is questioned by **Ryu** about the stolen drug. When he denies knowledge of it, **Kaneda** is put under **Kay**'s personal surveillance...to her immense dismay.

**Kiyoko**, another of the psychic children under the Colonel's control, warns her master that **Akira**—who is asleep and expected to remain so for some time—will awaken soon. The **Colonel** views this as disastrous. Meanwhile, at the resistance hideout, **Kaneda** encounters a ghost-like apparition of himself in flames, shouting a name...**Akira**.

The Colonel's spies learn where the resistance is centered, and soldiers enter the hideout in force, scattering the rebels.

**Kaneda** and **Kay** escape together. They flee to **Harukiya**, where the bartender agrees to shelter them.

Overwhelmed by pain, and by the burgeoning powers within him, **Tetsuo** breaks out of the Colonel's installation, leaving death in his wake.

Finally, he is cornered alone in the street...by the **Clown** gang.

STOP  
IT!!

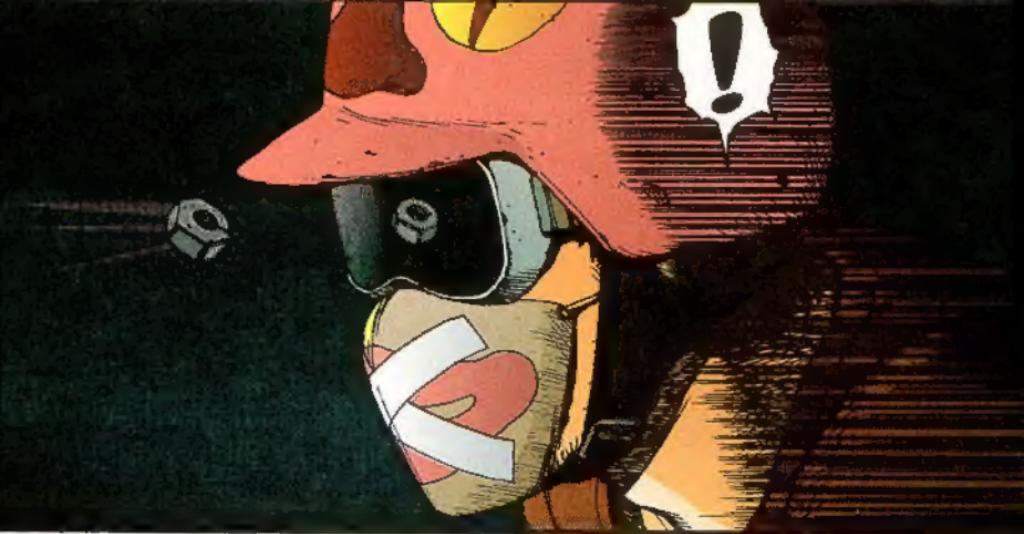
MY HEAD IS  
SPLITTING...

NAW...  
IT  
ISN'T  
SPLITTING  
YET

...BUT IT'S  
GONNA  
BE!!

SWOOSH

CHING







GOD  
DAMN  
IT!



THE HEADACHE'S  
COMING BACK...  
STRONGER. LIKE  
I COULD DIE  
FROM IT!



DAMN!



WAIT--!



WE'LL GET  
YOU WHAT  
YOU  
NEED!

ARE  
YOU  
LOSING  
IT? SHUT UP!!



PUFF



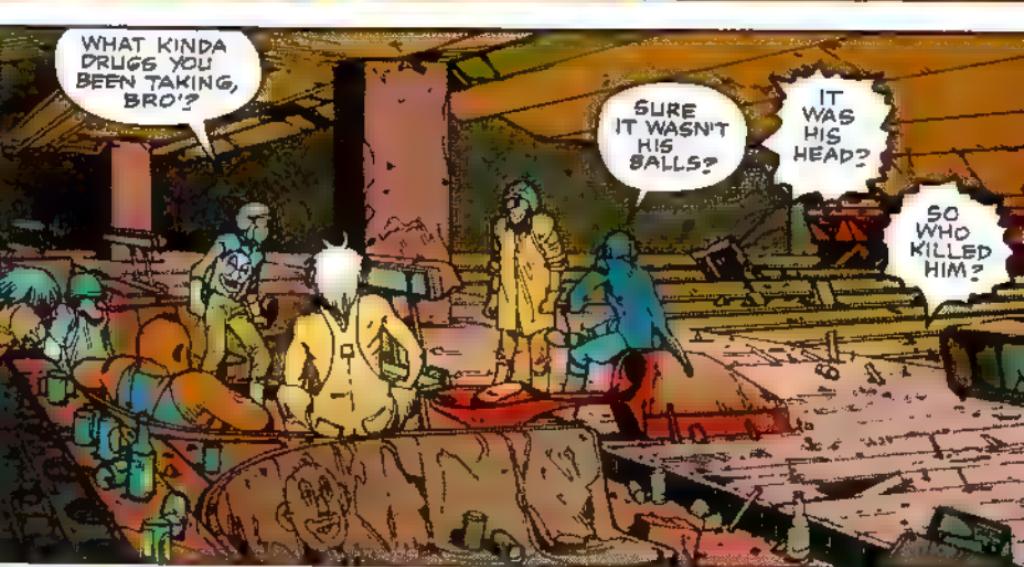


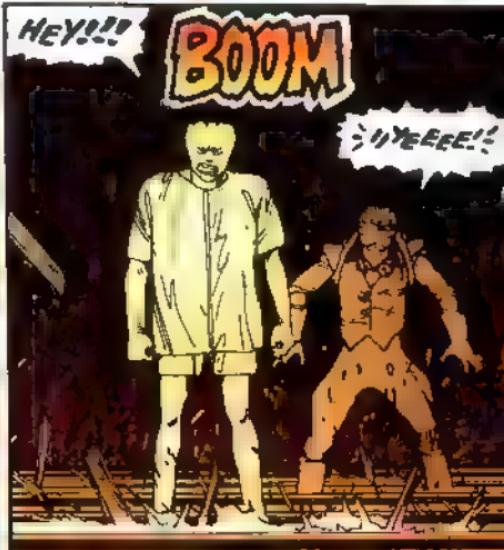
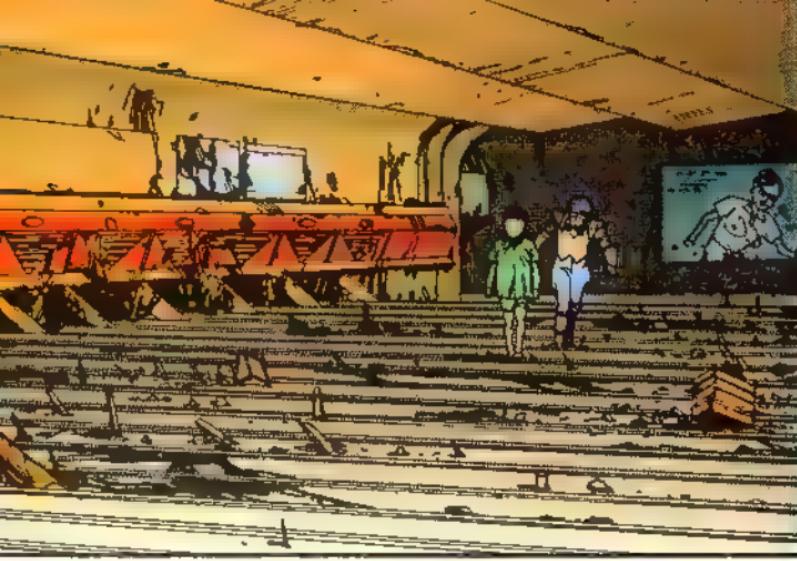




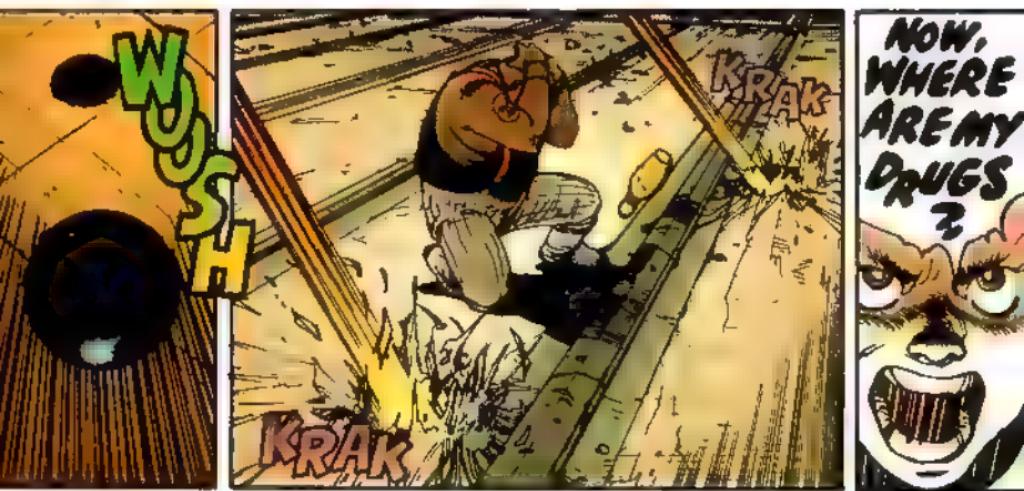
SKREEEE



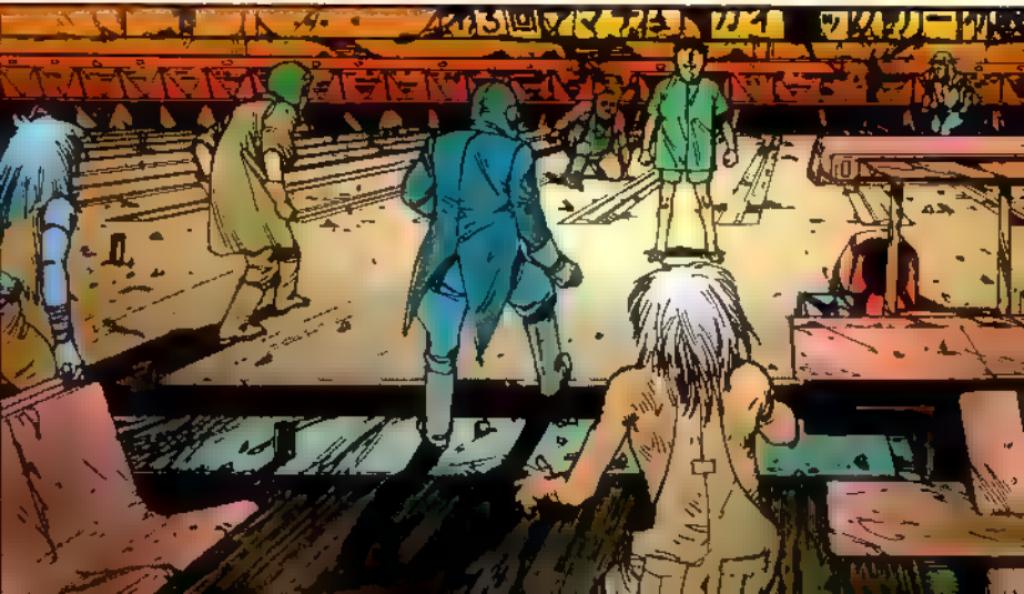






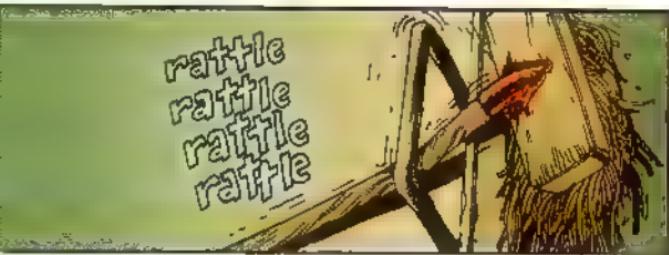


NOW,  
WHERE  
ARE MY  
DRUGS  
Z



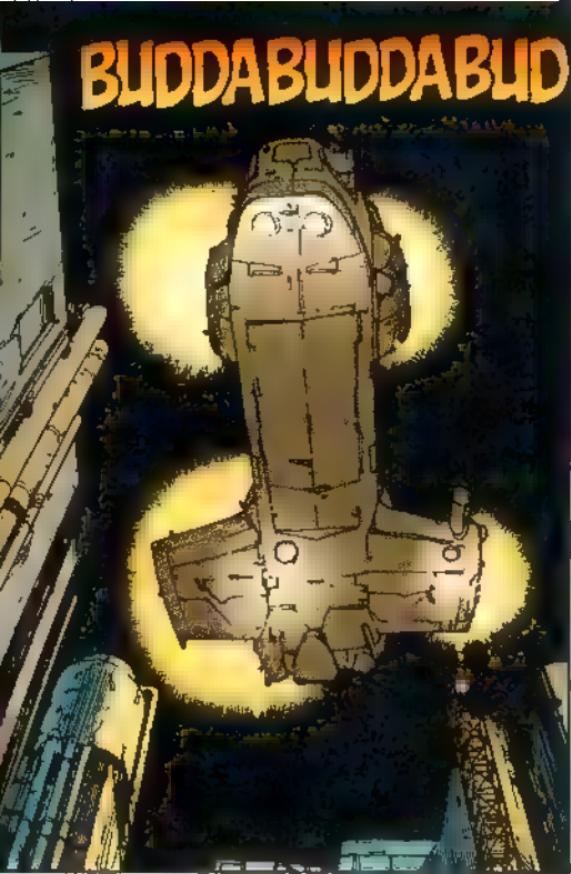


IT'S GOTTA BE  
AROUND HERE  
SOMEWHERE!









WILL HE BE  
ALL RIGHT?  
HE'S TAKING  
ALL OF  
THEM.

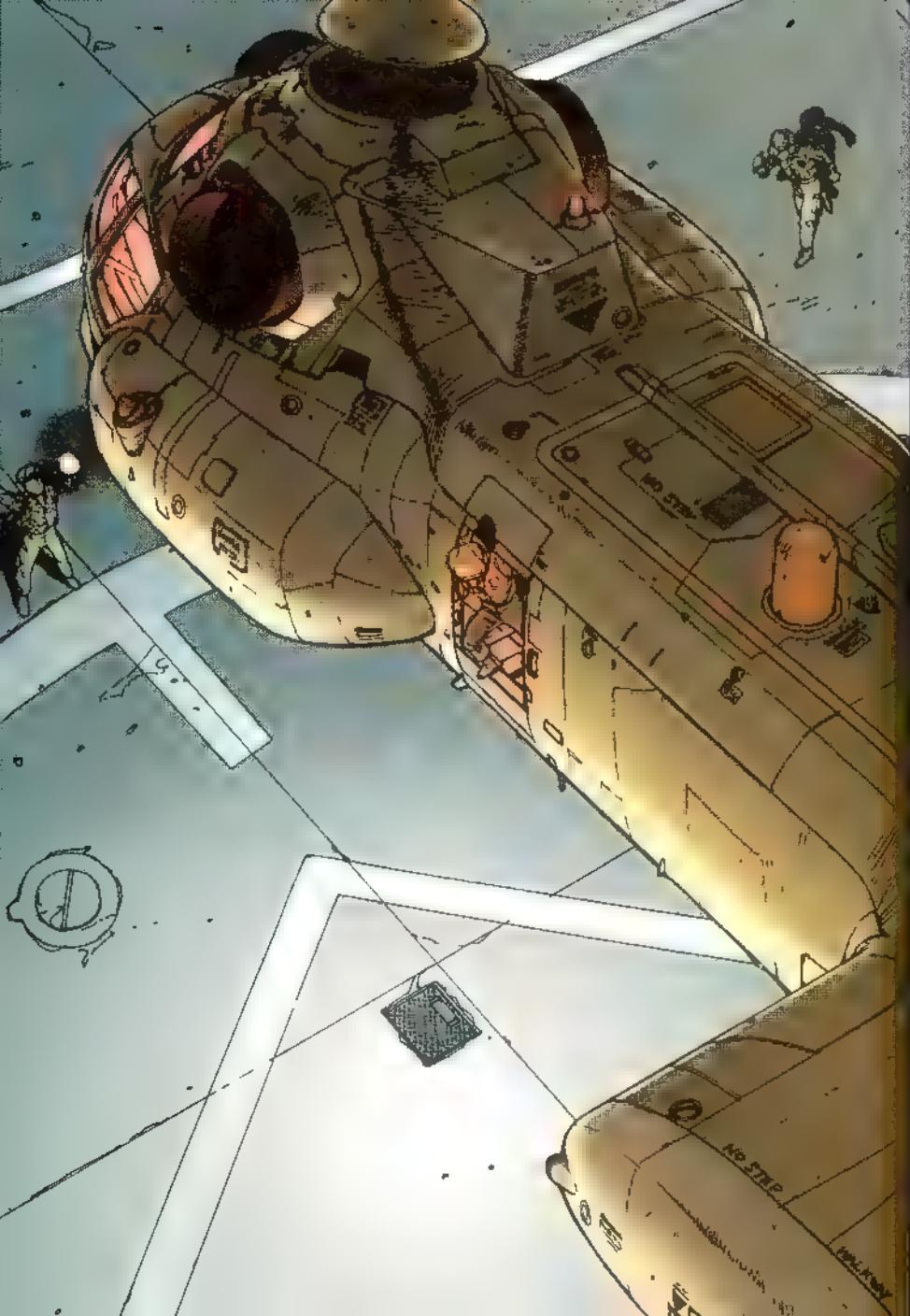
ALL?!  
CAN HE  
DO  
THAT?!

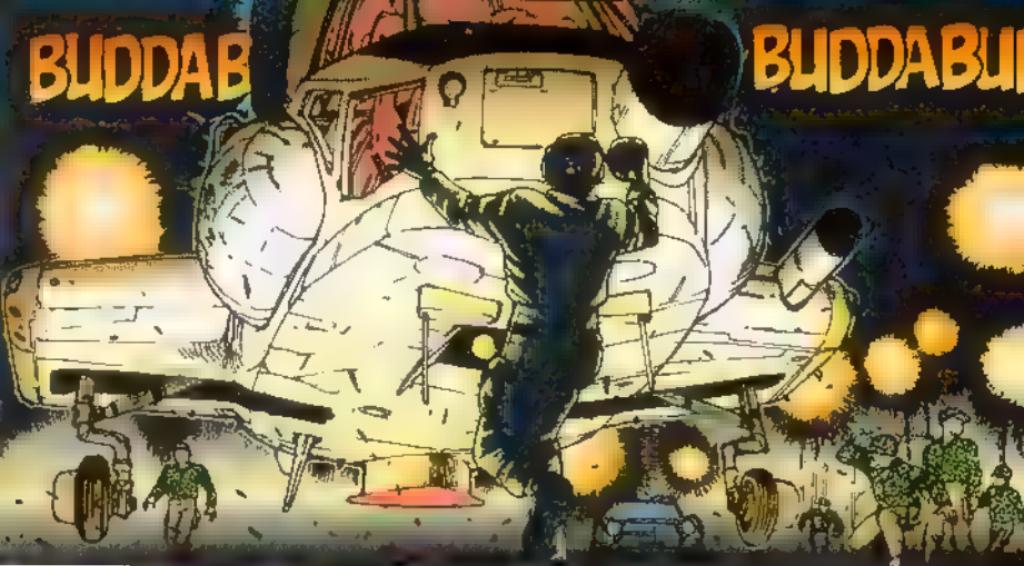
FER  
SURE!

\$3,500.00'S  
WORTH GONE...  
JUST LIKE  
THAT.

STOP COMPLAINING...  
THE ONLY REASON  
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE  
IS BECAUSE I LET  
YOU LIVE.









**TAK TAK TAK TAK**



ME AND  
MY SHADOW.  
WHEREVER I  
GO,  
THAT SKINHEAD  
SHOWS  
UP.  
BUT...  
I'M NO  
FOOL.



# ONGONGONG

KLANK

SHIT!



YIPE!



OH NO!



OH, CRAP!!

OVER THERE!!

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE!

AN INTRUDER!

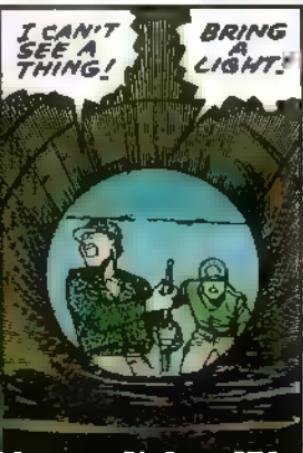
HALT HALT!!

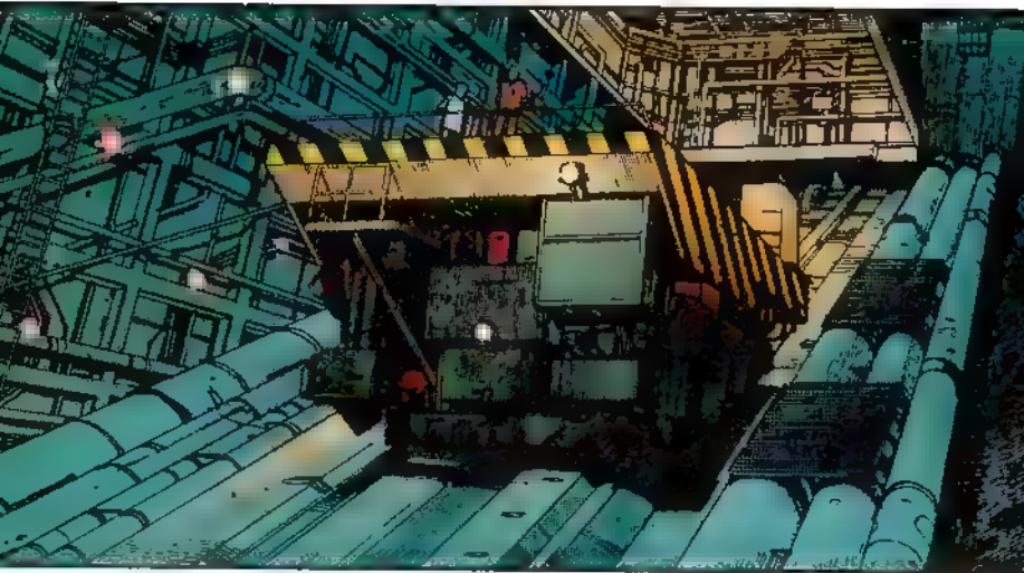














YOU'LL NEED  
TO WEAR ONE  
OF THESE,  
SIR.



COLONEL!

THIS  
WAY,  
SIR.



LEVEL TEN  
IS AT 140°  
KELVIN.\*  
LEVEL NINE,  
218°  
KELVIN.

LEVEL SIX,  
620 KELVIN.  
LEVEL FIVE,  
420 KELVIN.

LEVEL THREE,  
200 KELVIN  
LEVEL TWO,  
2° KELVIN.

LEVEL ONE AT  
.005° KELVIN.  
WHAT ARE THE  
READINGS ON  
THE DEWAR  
WALLS\* OF  
EACH ROOM?

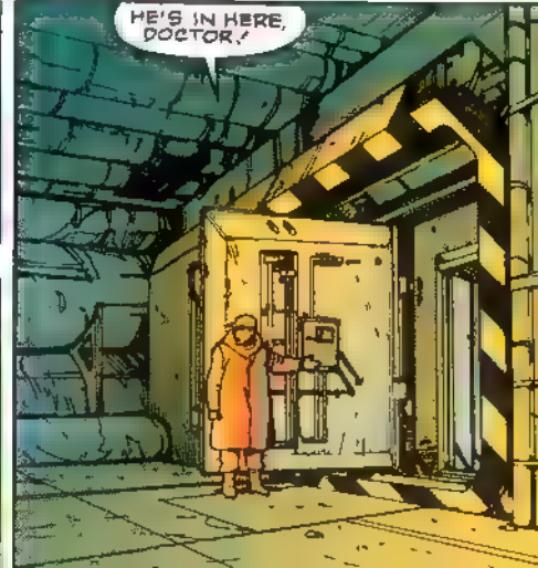
\* 0° KELVIN = -273.15° CENTIGRADE (ALSO KNOWN AS  
ABSOLUTE ZERO. 140° KELVIN = -125.15° CENTIGRADE.



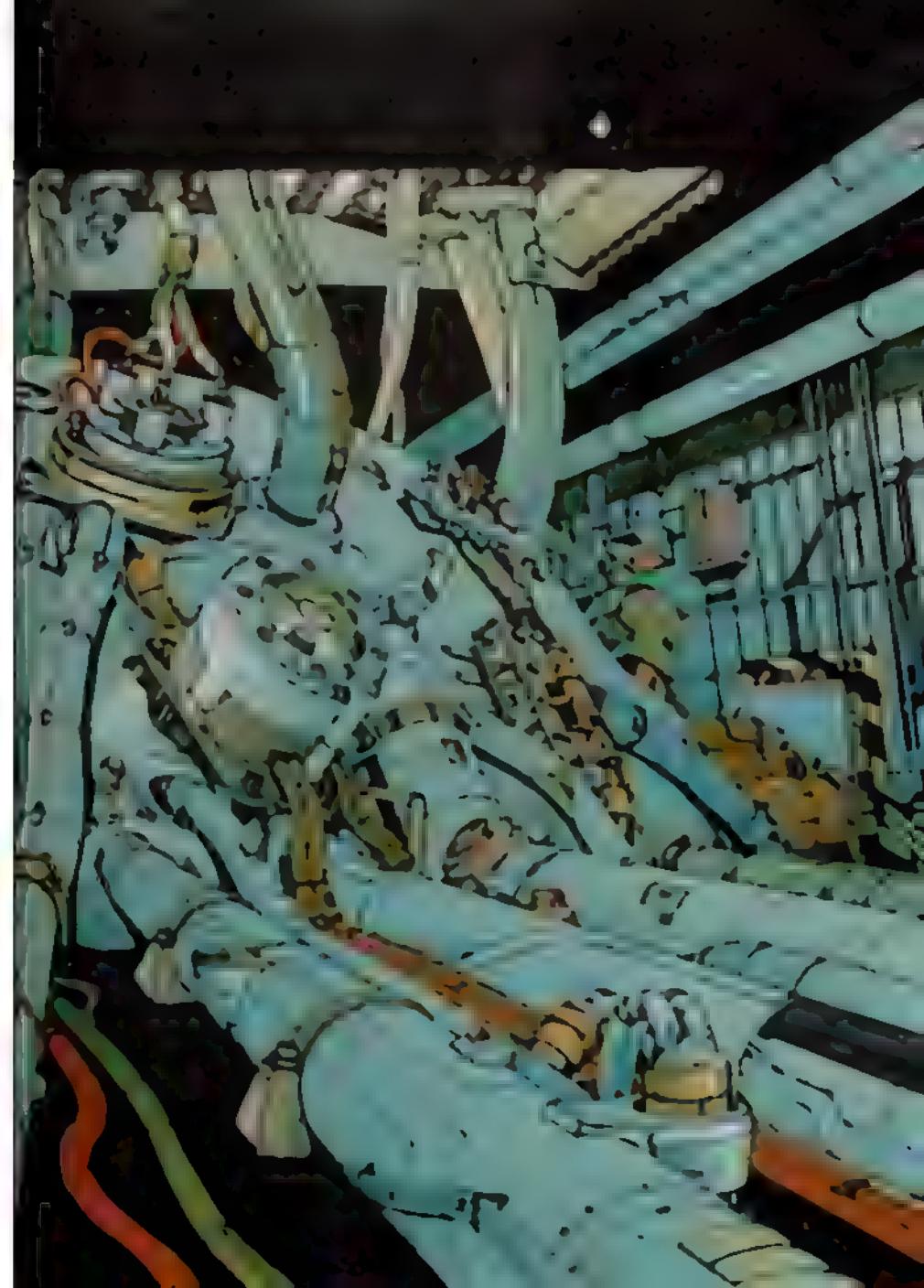
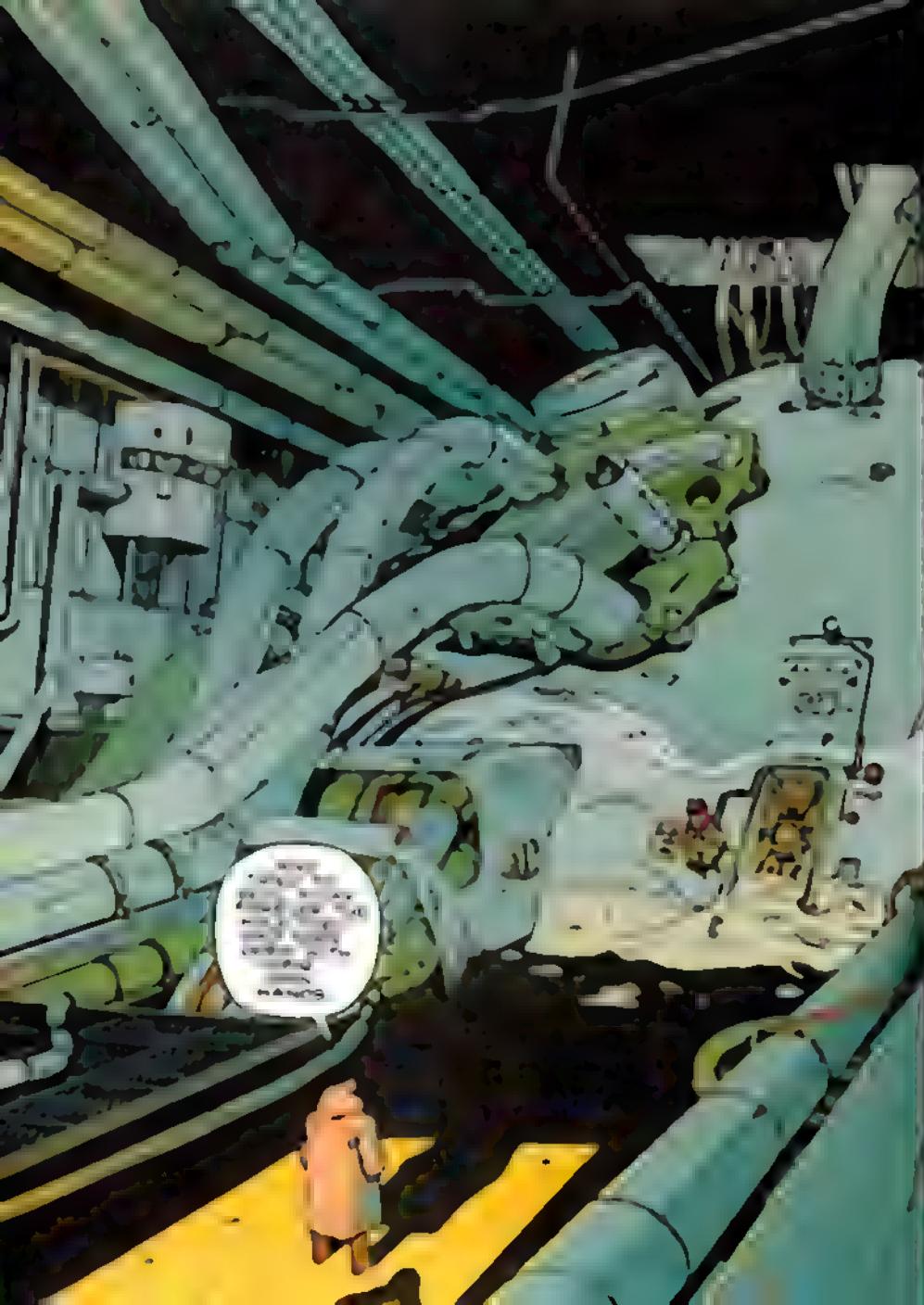
IT'S  
PERFECT,  
SIR.



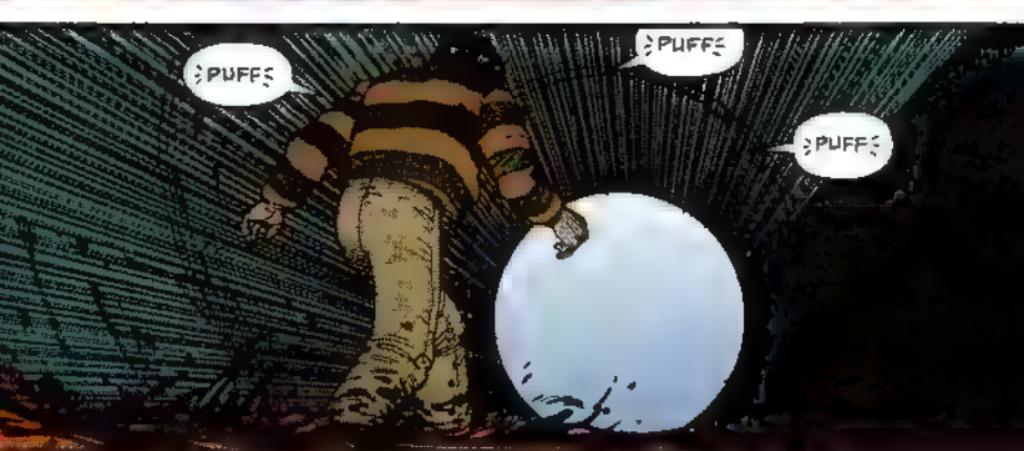
COLONEL,  
WHERE  
ARE YOU?!











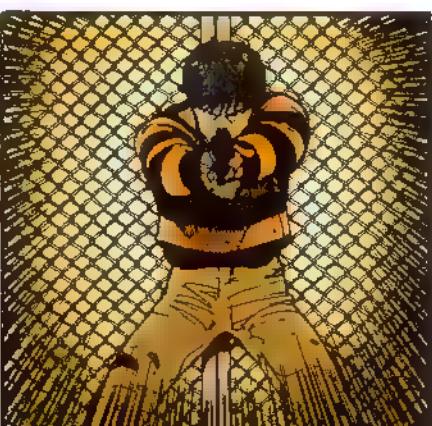


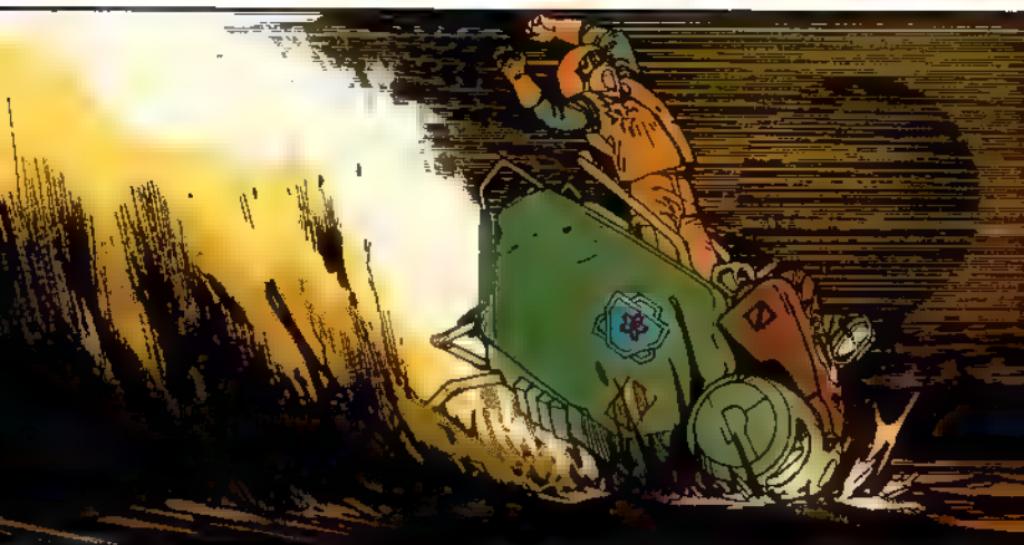
AS SOON AS  
WE'VE GOT  
THE RAT  
CORNED, KILL IT!

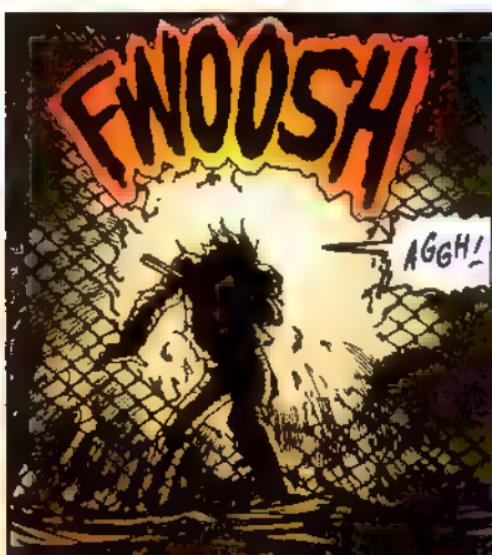


OKAY,  
WISE  
GUYS, YOU  
ASKED  
FOR IT!







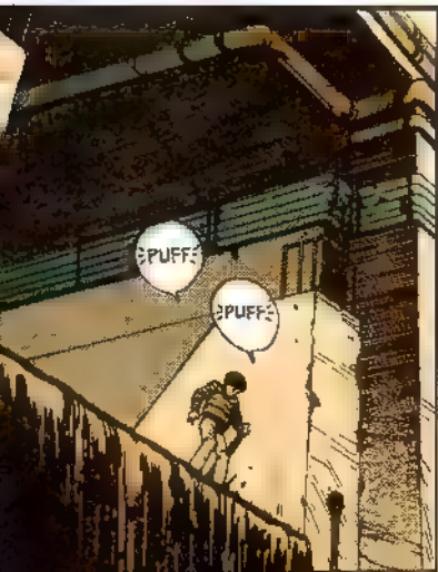






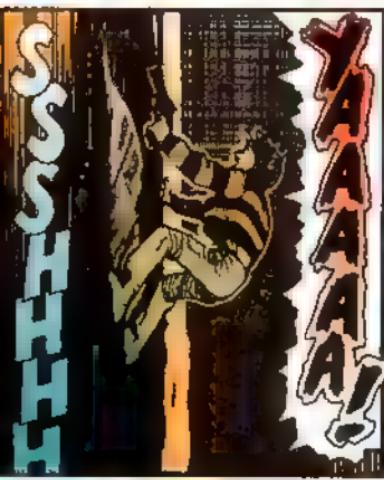
# КАТОКАТОКАТОКАТОКАТОКАТОКА

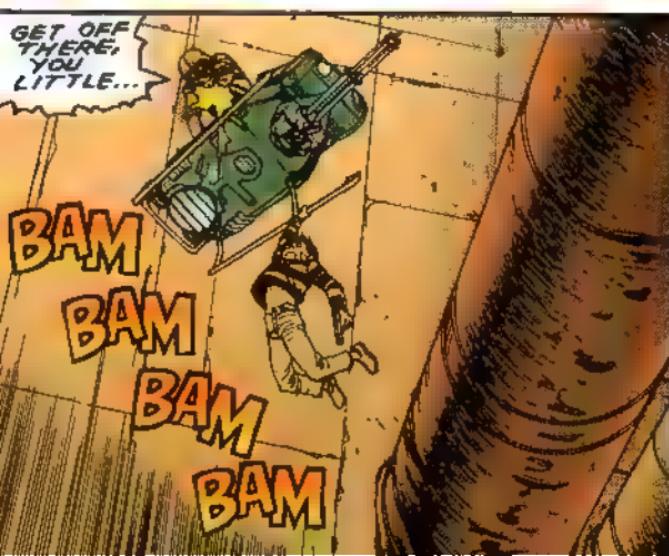






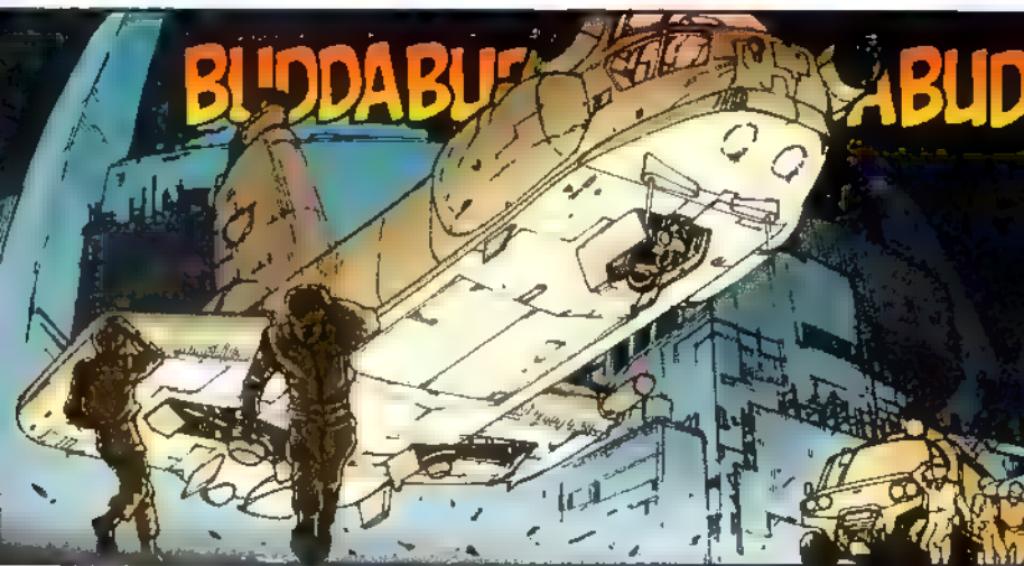
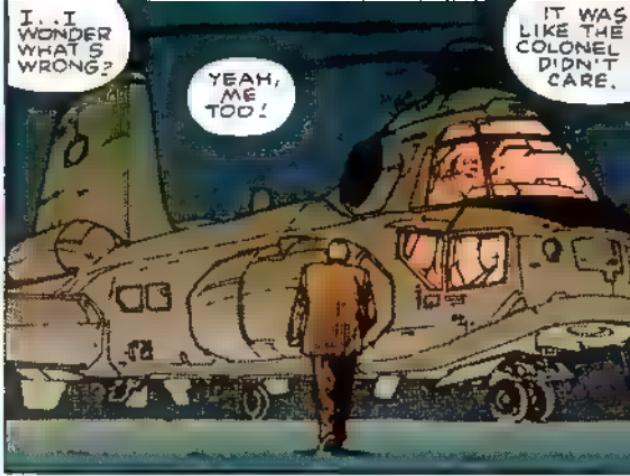






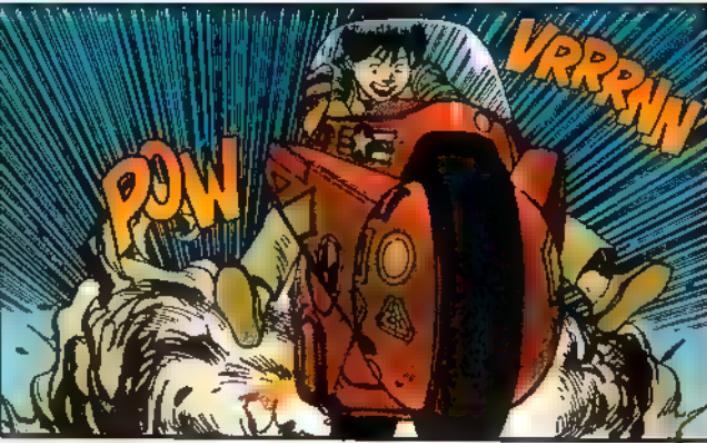
















YOU  
KNOW...



WHAT?!

YOU REALLY  
STINK!  
SAME TO YOU,  
SWEETHEART!



WHEN YOU  
GET HOME,  
TAKE A  
BATH!!

I HATE  
BATHS!!



I CAN  
TELL!!

I KNOW!  
LET'S TAKE  
ONE  
TOGETHER!



YOU  
JERK!!

OW!  
KNOCK IT  
OFF, OR  
WE'LL  
HAVE AN  
ACCIDENT!



# KATSUHIRO OTOMO

**T**he creator of **Akira** was born in April of 1954 in Japan's Miyagi Prefecture, some 400 kilometers northeast of Tokyo. He grew up there and attended Sanuma High School, whose graduates also include one of Japan's most famous comics creators, **Shotaro Ishinomori**, whose work includes **Cyborg 009** and the current best seller, **Japan Inc.**

In 1973, after graduation, Otomo moved to Tokyo. His goal was to become a comics artist and in August of that year he achieved it with his first published work, **Mateo Falcone**, an adaptation of the short novel by **Prosper Mérimée**.

Over the next few years, Otomo's reputation grew based upon a large number of short stories (twenty to thirty pages) which appeared most regularly in **Action** magazine. Later these works would be collected in book format, beginning with **Short Piece** in 1979 and followed by **Highway Star** (October 1979), **Good Weather** (March 1981), and **Boogie Woogie Waltz** (May 1982).

After success with the short story form, Otomo turned to the longer saga-style more commonly associated with Japanese comics. **Fireball**, a human versus mega-computer story, appeared in a limited circulation magazine in 1979. Though still uncompleted, it marked the beginning of Otomo's interest in the science-fiction action genre and is a natural forerunner to his most acclaimed works, **Domu** and **Akira**.

**Domu**, a 230 page graphic novel centering on a conflict

between two individuals possessing deadly psychic powers, began serialization in 1980 and continued for two years. Published in book form in 1983, it was an instant best seller and created something of a controversy when it was awarded Japan's science-fiction Grand Prix of 1983 for best s-f novel, the first time the prize ever went to a comics work.

This led Otomo to undertake an even more ambitious project, **Akira**, which would be some 1800 pages long. Otomo launched **Akira** in **Young Magazine** published by **Kodansha Ltd.** This tradition-breaking but struggling bi-weekly was aimed at a high school-college student audience whom Otomo felt was most in tune with the new directions he hoped to achieve. The rising circulation of **Young Magazine** with the appearance of **Akira** proved him correct. Today, there are over a million readers.

In book format **Akira** was just as much a phenomenon. The first volume was a best seller the moment it appeared in stores. The subsequent three volumes have been received with equal enthusiasm. With the fifth and final volume (planned for Spring of 1989), the saga will have a total of three million copies in print.

The latest success for Otomo and **Akira** was the feature length animated film. Opening in July, this new interpretation of the comics story for which Otomo acted as director, scenarist, designer and illustrator set attendance records for an animated movie in Japan.

**KATSUHIRO OTOMO**

writer/illustrator

**YASUMITSU SUETAKE**  
chief assistant to Mr. Otomo

**MAKOTO SHIOSAKI**  
**SATOSHI TAKABATAKE**  
assistants to Mr. Otomo

**HIROSHI HIRATA**  
designer, AKIRA calligraph

**AKIRA SAITO**  
designer, Kodansha edition

Kodansha Ltd.

**YOKO UMEZAWA**  
with **LINDA M. YORK**  
translation

**KOICHI YURI**  
editor, Kodansha edition

**NORIYUKI OKAZAKI**  
**YUKA ANDO**  
editorial coordinators

Epic Comics

**JO DUFFY**  
english adaptation

**STEVE OLIFF**  
colorist

**MICHAEL HIGGINS**  
letterer

**MIKE ROCKWITZ**  
**HARRY CANDELARIO**  
**MICHAEL HEISLER**  
production

**MARK CHIARELLO**  
editorial assistant, Epic edition

**ARCHIE GOODWIN**  
Editor, Epic edition

**A** new force moves through the post World War III city of Neo-Tokyo. A force dubbed Number 41 by the secret government agency monitoring his moves. Once he was a teenage motorcycle gang member named Tetsuo, but that was before a strange accident put him in the hands of the government and left him...changed. A power is growing in Tetsuo. It allows him to kill with a glance. Violently. Explosively. But the power also corrupts. It turns him against his best friend, Kaneda. It drives him to seek out the murderous Clown cycle gang, bitter rivals of his former friends. Yet for all his emerging power, Tetsuo is still only a shadow of something greater to come, a sleeping giant not yet awakened..AKIRA.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S



# AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

BOOK TWO